



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conservation, Industry Leaders Team Up to Restore Groundwater In California's Central Valley

Water agencies, conservation organizations and The Coca-Cola Company launch unique partnership to improve supply of groundwater for farming, communities and environment, serving as a model for other regions impacted by groundwater overdraft

FRESNO – With California experiencing one of its worst droughts on record – and as more Central Valley farms and communities turn to shrinking groundwater supplies to get by – an uncommon alliance of public, private and nonprofit leaders is offering some relief for dry years ahead.

The California Department of Water Resources, Laguna Irrigation District, Kings Basin Water Authority, Coca-Cola and Sustainable Conservation are launching an effort in the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley to recharge dwindling groundwater reserves using floodwater when precipitation returns to the Golden State.

The project involves turning 52 acres of former farmland into a giant dirt bathtub, eight feet deep with earthen sides, called a recharge basin. During wet years, floodwater from the nearby Kings River will be redirected to fill the basin where it will then seep into the ground and raise water levels in the aquifer below. The project site was chosen for its sandy soils that allow for rapid percolation and maximum recharge. The additional groundwater can be used immediately or stored for dry years.

Project partners anticipate that the basin will recharge the underlying groundwater aquifer with approximately 2,600 acre feet, or more than 3 billion liters, of water each year on average. That's enough water to irrigate around 1,300 acres of crops like grapes or tomatoes.

“For years, our irrigation district has managed groundwater recharge basins to ensure local users have enough groundwater to supplement their needs,” said Scott Sills, General Manager of the Laguna Irrigation District, which will oversee construction, operation and maintenance of the recharge basin. “However, dry conditions and more groundwater pumping have caused concern about whether historical groundwater levels will return. The joint recharge project will bring a new opportunity to replenish groundwater supplies for local landowners and neighboring towns – and has the added benefit of reducing the risk of costly flooding to our downstream communities.”

The Kings River basin – which crosses Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties – is one of the most productive farming areas in the U.S. Agriculture there generates billions of dollars annually in revenue – with a high percentage of local jobs tied to farming. This economic success is threatened, however, by declines in groundwater levels. Many well owners are drilling deeper, costly wells to find water – some hundreds of feet deeper than was necessary just a decade ago. Since California’s latest drought began in 2012, some wells have simply dried up.

On average, farms and communities in the Kings River basin are extracting more groundwater annually than can be replaced by rainfall or snowmelt – enough water to satisfy approximately 330,000 average households each year. Similar amounts are lost during floods when significant volumes of water flow out to the Pacific Ocean. More recharge projects like the current one that capture floodwater can significantly improve the region’s groundwater balance.

“Historically, the Kings River has been a significant water resource for farmers, communities and environmental uses in the region,” said Cristel Tufenkjian, Program Coordinator with the Kings Basin Water Authority, a consortium of regional water management stakeholders. “In addition, groundwater is an important water supply for our region, especially in drought years. The recharge project helps with sustainability for our area’s water resources, economy and people.”

“The state’s prolonged drought and subsequent stress on our natural resources require everyone – from industry to nonprofits – to work collaboratively on solutions that benefit all,” said Ashley Boren, Executive Director of Sustainable Conservation, which is coordinating private investment in the project. “While the project won’t single-handedly solve California’s groundwater problem, expanding the power of public-private partnerships like ours will help drive a more sustainable water future for California.”

California Department of Water Resources Director Mark Cowin, whose agency provided a majority of the funding for the project, said, “The Kings River recharge project is a good example of what we call integrated water management. By working together, state, local and private interests can maximize water project benefits and help make California’s water system as a whole more resilient.”

“At Coca-Cola, we respect and value water as one of the Earth’s most precious resources,” said Jon Radtke, Water Resource Sustainability Manager for Coca-Cola North America, which is helping fund the project through a major grant. “We know that water is critical to the health, wellness and economic prosperity of local communities. Our work with the Kings River recharge basin is a great example of how we are partnering with local communities to help steward water resources. Together with our community partners we are working to meet our Company’s goal to replenish an amount of water equivalent to what we use in our finished beverages.”

The potential for more water is welcome news for thousands of families, many of them living below the poverty line, who depend solely on the area’s groundwater for drinking, cooking and bathing. While not currently a problem in the Kings River basin, expanding efforts to recharge groundwater aquifers across the San Joaquin Valley could help avoid costly repairs to roads, irrigation canals and other infrastructure that’s increasingly being damaged due to land subsidence from the over-pumping of groundwater.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is responsible for managing and protecting California’s water. DWR works with other agencies to benefit the state’s people, and to protect, restore and enhance the natural and human environments. DWR operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

www.water.ca.gov

ABOUT THE COCA-COLA COMPANY

The Coca-Cola Company (NYSE: KO) is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands. Led by Coca-Cola, one of the world's most valuable and recognizable brands, our Company's portfolio features 17 billion-dollar brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, Powerade, Minute Maid, Simply, Georgia and Del Valle. Globally, we are the No. 1 provider of sparkling beverages, ready-to-drink coffees, and juices and juice drinks. Through the world's largest beverage distribution system, consumers in more than 200 countries enjoy our beverages at a rate of 1.9 billion servings a day. With an enduring commitment to building sustainable communities, our Company is focused on initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint, support active, healthy living, create a safe, inclusive work environment for our associates, and enhance the economic development of the communities where we operate. Together with our bottling partners, we rank among the world's top 10 private employers with more than 700,000 system associates. For more information, visit Coca-Cola Journey at

www.coca-colacompany.com, follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/CocaColaCo, visit our blog, Coca-Cola Unbottled, at www.coca-colablog.com or find us on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/the-coca-cola-company.

ABOUT KINGS BASIN WATER AUTHORITY

The Kings Basin Water Authority includes nearly 60 public, private and non-governmental organizations that have joined together to prepare an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to help protect and improve the water resources within the region. www.kingsbasinauthority.org

ABOUT LAGUNA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

The Laguna Irrigation District was formed in 1920 and serves more than 35,000 acres of farmland in southern Fresno and northern Kings counties utilizing surface water from the Kings River delivered through approximately 100 miles of canals and pipelines. The irrigation district's mission is to provide surface water to landowners and maintain the groundwater aquifer for the benefit of all.

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

Sustainable Conservation believes promoting a healthy environment can be good for business. The nonprofit's award-winning climate, air, water and wildlife initiatives promote practical solutions and tangible results for California. Founded in 1993, Sustainable Conservation's effectiveness lies in building strong alliances with business, agriculture and government – and establishing models for environmental and economic sustainability that can be replicated across California and beyond.

www.suscon.org

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Contact the DWR Public Affairs Office for more information

